Good wishes to President of Nepal

†678. SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:
SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government did not extend its good wishes to the new President of Nepal early;

(b) whether it is being alleged that India had endeavoured for who should be the President;

(c) whether it is a fact that at the time of termination of Hindu State, India was first to congratulate; and

(d) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The President of Nepal was sworn in on July 23, 2008. A message of congratulations from our President was conveyed to the Nepalese President the same day.

(b) Government are of the view that it is for the people of Nepal to decide the manner in which they wish to be governed.

(c) and (d) No. Do not arise.

Visit to PM of Nepal

679. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister of Nepal has, recently, visited India and held discussions with his counterpart and other prominent leaders on several issues;

(b) if so, the details of discussions held and outcome thereof;

(c) whether any assurance has been given by the Prime Minister of Nepal to wipe out camps of terrorists and Maoists in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Yes. The newly elected Prime Minister of Nepal visited India from September 14-18, 2008. During the visit, the entire gamut of bilateral relationship came up for discussions. It was decided to reactivate bilateral mechanisms with Nepal including those in water resources, trade and transit and security issues. Both sides have agreed to enhance cooperation in handling cross-border crime and security concerns.

The text of the Joint Press Statement issued during the visit is enclosed.

Joint Press Statement on official visit of Rt. Hon'ble Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Prime Minister of Nepal to India (14-18 September 2008).

The Rt. Hon'ble Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Prime Minister of Nepal, is on an official visit to India from September 14-18, 2008 at the invitation of H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

India. The Prime Minister of Nepal is accompanied by Hon'ble Mr. Upendra Yadav, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Information and Communication, Hon'ble Mr. Bishnu Prasad Poudel, Minister for Water Resources and Hon'ble Mr. Rajendra Mahato, Minister for Commerce and Supplies. The delegation includes four members of the Constituent Assembly, senior officials of the Government of Nepal, a business delegation and a delegation of media representatives.

2. During his visit, the Prime Minister of Nepal called on H.E. Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, the President of India, and on H.E. Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, the Vice President of India. The Prime Minister of Nepal had a meeting with the Prime Minister of India, which was followed by delegation level talks, led by the two Prime Ministers, on issues of mutual interest and concern. The Prime Minister of India hosted a banquet in honour of the Prime Minister of Nepal. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs, Prof. Saif-u-Din-Soz, Minister of Water Resources and Shri L.K. Advani, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha called on the Prime Minister of Nepal. The Prime Minister of Nepal had a meeting with Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the President of Indian National Congress. The Prime Minister of Nepal also visited Rajghat and paid homage to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. An interaction with the Indian business community was jointly hosted by ASSOCHAM, CII and FICCI in honour of the visiting dignitary. During his stay in India, the Prime Minister is visiting Bangalore from September 17-18, 2008.

3. The Prime Minister of India extended a warm welcome to the Prime Minister of Nepal as the first Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The two Prime Ministers expressed satisfaction at the age-old close, cordial and extensive relationships existing between Nepal and India. Both Prime Ministers expressed their support and cooperation to further consolidate the relationship in the days ahead.

4. The talks were held in an atmosphere of utmost cordiality and warmth. They shared their views and assessment of the situation. The two Prime Ministers acclaimed the importance of peaceful, political, democratic transformation of historic significance in Nepal.

5. The Prime Minister of Nepal appreciated the positive support extended by the people and Government of India throughout the peaceful political democratic transformation in the country.

6. The Government of India expressed full support to the peaceful, political, democratic transition in Nepal.

7. Both leaders recognized the historic changes that have taken place in Nepal with the elections to the Constituent Assembly and the declaration of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal according to the wishes of the people of Nepal.

8. The Prime Minister of Nepal stressed that following the Constituent Assembly elections, bringing the peace process to a logical conclusion, writing a new Constitution and accelerating the pace of economic development are the main priorities of the Government of Nepal in the days ahead.

9. The two sides felt the need to inject new dynamism into the relations between the two countries for a forward looking change in tune with the realities of the time as well as the wishes and aspirations of the people of both the countries.

10. Both sides agreed to reactivate the existing bilateral mechanisms in the evolving context.

11. Both sides noted that the multi-faceted and deep-rooted relationships between the two countries needed further consolidation and expansion in a forward-looking manner to better reflect the current realities. It was in this broader context that the two Prime Ministers agreed to review, adjust and update the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and other agreements, while giving due recognition to the special features of the bilateral relationship. A High-Level Committee at the level of Foreign Secretaries will be set up for this purpose.

12. The Nepalese side informed that Government of Nepal will take further necessary measures for the promotion of investor friendly, enabling business environment to encourage Indian public and private sector investments in Nepal.

13. Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in handling cross-border crime and security concerns. Home Secretaries will meet soon to implement this decision.

14. Government of India will continue to assist the Government and people of Nepal in its peaceful, democratic transition; its economic development and reconstruction. The areas of assistance would include infrastructure, human resource development, health and education.

15. Both sides expressed concern over the large-scale damage caused by the breach of embankment by the river in the Kosi barrage area and decided to launch relief and rehabilitation measures for the victims and the reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure, and other measures as per the agreements, immediately, and take up preventive measures to avoid the recurrence of such events in the long term. They decided to take up preventive measures for the Gandak and other barrages under existing bilateral arrangements. Likewise, the two sides also discussed the problem of inundation in the border areas between Nepal and India and agreed to take up necessary work for its effective prevention on the basis of bilateral consultation.

16. Government of India will provide Rs. 20 crores as immediate flood relief to the people in Nepal. Government of India will also rebuild the segments of the East-West Highway, damaged in the recent Kosi floods.

17. Both sides agreed that Government of India will set up a camp office in Biratnagar for facilitating movement of Nepali vehicular traffic through Bihar for improved access to other parts of Nepal till the Highway is repaired.

18. A three-tier mechanism at the level of Ministerial, Secretary and technical levels will be established to rationalize and raise the efficacy of the existing bilateral mechanisms in order to push forward discussions on the development of water resources in a comprehensive manner, including hydro-power generation, irrigation, flood control and other water related cooperation. The Secretaries will meet in two weeks.

19. The two Prime Ministers directed the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) at the level of Commerce Secretaries to meet in one month to initiate a comprehensive review of the existing trade and transit arrangements with a view to promoting industrialization in Nepal, expanding complementarities of bilateral trade on a sustainable basis and removing the barriers to trade.

20. Both sides agreed to further enhance the pace of economic development between the two countries by extending support for the preparation and execution of mega projects, including infrastructure development such as road, rail and hydel-power projects. As a gesture of goodwill of the Government and people of India, Government of India agreed to implement the Naumure Hydro-electric Project on Rapti River.

21. In view of the shortages felt in Nepal for the essential commodities, Government of India will remove bans on the export of rice, wheat, maize, sugar and sucrose for quantities agreed with Nepal. Government of India will also provide a credit of up to Rs. 150 crores to Government of Nepal for the next three months to ensure uninterrupted POL supplies to Nepal.

22. The Prime Minister of Nepal extended an invitation to the Prime Minister of India to pay an official visit to Nepal at an early date. The Prime Minister of India accepted it with pleasure. The date of the visit will be decided through the diplomatic channel.

New Delhi,
September 17, 2008

Discussion on Kosi dam with Nepal

680. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken up the matter of breach of Kosi dam with Government of Nepal and proposes to set up a judicial commission of inquiry into the matter;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether Government has sent any team of experts to Nepal to discuss further course of action on the repair of the Kosi dam; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Yes. The matter was raised with the Government of Nepal, including at the highest political level during the recent visit of Prime Minister of Nepal to India from September 14-18, 2008. The Government of Nepal has assured its full cooperation in resolving this problem. The matter was also discussed in the meeting of the Joint Commission on Water Resources (JCWR) held in Kathmandu, Nepal from September 29-October 1, 2008. The JCWR has decided to empower the existing inter-governmental "Joint Committee on Kosi and Gandak Project" with financial and functional authority to identify the issues, formulate and approve annual action plan and oversee the implementation.

Government do not propose to set up a joint inter-governmental judicial commission.

Several teams of experts from the Central and State Government of Bihar have visited Nepal in recent months to determine the further course of action on the repair and restoration of the Kosi embankment. A High Level Expert Team, led by Chairman, Central Water Commission is undertaking an inspection of the flood-affected structures of the Kosi breach site to suggest further measures and long-term solutions.